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PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY 'LIKELY TO STRIKE FIRST'

By JOHN MOSSMAN

AMMAN, Thursday.

MR. AHMED SHUKEIRY, head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, said today it was "possible and even most likely" that his Palestine Liberation Army or Jordanian forces would fire the first shot which would unleash war in the Middle East. "It is either us or Israel," he declared.

Speaking to reporters in Amman, he said: "There is no middle road solution, nothing short of liberation will be accepted."

If the Arabs took Israel, the surviving Jews would be helped to return to their native countries. "But my estimation is that none will survive."

Mr. Shukeiry said the Palestine Liberation Army had over 8,000 men, equipped with tanks. They were stationed in the Gaza Strip and on the Syrian-Israeli frontier. He would soon be visiting the P L A forces in Syria.

He said the P L O's Jerusalem headquarters had reopened today. The organisation was banned in Jordan last November.

The reopening of the office is thought to be part of an undisclosed bargain struck between King Hussein and President Nasser when they signed a defence pact in Cairo on Tuesday.

A Jordanian Government spokesman said he had no official comment to make about Mr. Shukeiry's statements. His views had never coincided with those of the Jordanian Government.

Mr. Shukeiry attended a Jordanian Cabinet meeting today presided over by King Hussein. Gen Khammash, the Jordanian Army chief, also took part.

The King has assured his position by signing the pact with Egypt. But, as one prominent Jordanian said tonight, "it is a marriage of convenience—divorce can come at any time."

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